DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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EXEMPTIONS

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CONFIDENTIAL

Q: What impact would the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia have on the military stability in the region? In particular, as a potential adversary of Israel in another Middle East war, what capability would AWACS give Saudi, Syrian and possibly Jordanian air forces individually? Would this require significant purchases of counter-measures on the part of Israel to neutralize the potential offensive capability associated with AWACS?

A: (U) As the deployment of USAF AWACS to Saudi Arabia has demonstrated, the added warning of a potential air attack which these aircraft provide is a stabilizing influence during periods of increased tension. During the Iran-Iraq war, AWACS has helped to deter the belligerents from attacking Saudi Arabia's oil facilities and other installations.

(U) In the event of another Middle East war involving Israel, the Saudis would be very unlikely to employ AWACS opposite Israel. Such an employment would expose their AWACS to the very real threat of being shot down by Israeli fighters. It would also leave largely unprotected the most important Saudi economic and population centers in the northeast and southwest.

(C) Moreover, a Saudi AWACS operating close to Israel would provide data of very limited usefulness to the Saudis, Jordanians, or Syrians. Jordanian and Syrian ground-based radars already provide extensive coverage of Israeli airspace.

(U) Little of the data collected by AWACS could effectively be passed to other nation's air defense networks unless they were equipped with US-designed communications and computer gear. We do not intend to provide such equipment.

(U) Since the AWACS will not appreciably increase the potential threat to Israel, significant purchases by Israel of counter-measures to AWACS would not be required.